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Message Text

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62
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCSE-00 SCA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 DHA-02 H-02 SS-15

NSC-05 /063 W
---------- 079999
R 291502Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2305

UNCLAS MONTEVIDEO 3688

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SHUM, UY
SUBJ: ALLEGATIONS BY SENATOR CHURCH

REF: USINFO 2414022 SEP 76

1. REFTEL QUOTED REMARKS FROM SEPTEMBER 22, 1976 CONGRESSIONAL RECORD BY SENATOR CHURCH, HEADED, "HALTING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO URUGUAY."

2. ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY HAS REPORTED ON THE FOLLOWING EXTENSIVELY AND REPEATEDLY, IT IS OBLIGATED ONCE AGAIN TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT WHERE THERE ARE DISTORTIONS OR ERRORS OF FACT. ATTENTION IS DRAWN TO THE FOLLOWING:

CHURCH: "FIFTY THOUSAND, OR ONE IN EVERY 50 URUGUAYANS, HAVE PASSED THROUGH PRISON DURING THE SAME PERIOED (SINCE 1973)."

RESPONSE: A SIMILAR CHARGE WAS VOICED BY WILSON FERREIRA IN EUROPE LAST SPRING AND REPORTED FREELY IN THE LOCAL PRESS. THE REACTION OF THOSE URUGUAYANS WITH WHOM WE DISCUSSED IT, INCLUDING SOME OF FERREIRA'S CLOSEST ASSOCIATES, WAS THAT IT WAS SO ABSURD THAT IT WOULD TO THEIR CAUSE MORE HARM THAN GOOD. WE ARE VIRTUALLY AT A LOSS AS TO HOW TO RESPOND TO WHAT WE BELIEVE TO BE A GROSS DISTORTION AND CONTINUE TO QUESTION THE FACTUAL BASIS FOR THE CHARGE. WE BELIEVE THE FIGURE GIVEN TO BE A PHYSICAL IMPOSSI-
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BILITY GIVEN THE SIZE OF PRISONS, SECURITY FORCES AND OTHER FACTORS

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INVOLVED.

CHURCH: (REFERRING TO FERREIRA)"...THE MILITARY
REGIME HAS CONFISCATED ALL OF HIS PROPERTY..."

RESPONSE: THE EMBARGOED (NOT CONFISCATED) PROPERTIES ARE
BEING MANAGED AS AN ON-GOING BUSINESS BY FERREIRA'S SON GONZALO,
WHO RECENTLY PURCHASED CATTLE FOR HIS FATHER. WE SIMPLY RAISE THE
QUESTION OF WHETHER THIS INVESTMENT WOULD HAVE BEEN MADE HAD IT
BEEN FELT IT WAS IN JEOPARDY.

3. SENATOR CHURCH'S STATEMENT THAT 5,000 PERSONS HAD BEEN
IMPRISONED SINCE 1973 WAS A WELCOME CHANGE FROM THE MORE PRE-
VALENT CHARGES THAT 5,000 PERSONS ARE NOW IMPRISONED IN URUGUAY.
WE BELIEVE THAT VERY CLOSE TO 2,000 PERSONS ARE NOW DETAINED
CHARGED WITH CRIMES AGAINST THE STATE (THE VAST MAJORITY
NOT POLITICAL PRISONERS BY ANY CRITERIA). THE GOU
RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT IT RELEASED 1,365 DETAINEES BETWEEN
1972 AND AUGUST 1976. WHILE WE HAVE NO PRECISE DATA
ON THE NUMBER OF PERSONS ARRESTED, QUESTIONED AND RELEASED
SHORTLY THEREAFTER IT COULD WELL EXCEED 1000. THAT NUMBER COMBINED
WITH THOSE NOW UNDER DETENTION, PLUS THOSE RELEASED SINCE 1972,
WOULD BE CLOSE TO THE FIGURE OF 5,000 GIVEN BY SENATOR CHURCH,
I.E. IMPRISONED SINCE 1973, BUT NOT ALL STILL IN PRISON.

4. WE DID NOT HAVE PRECISE DATA ON PRISON POPULATION UNTIL SOME
FOUR MONTHS AGO. WE ARE QUITE SURE, HOWEVER, THAT OUR FIGURE OF
2,000 NOW BEING HELD IS ACCURATE. THE COMBINED POPULATION OF LIBER-
TAD AND PUNTA RIELES, THE PRIMARY DETENTION CENTERS WAS SLIGHTLY
OVER 1,500 THREE MONTHS AGO. WE BELIEVE SEVERAL HUNDRED MORE TO
BE IMPRISONED IN MONTEVIDEO AND IN ISOLATED SMALL DETENTION CEN-
TERS IN THE INTERIOR WHERE THE GOU HOLDS THOSE IT BELIEVES TO BE
THE MOST DANGEROUS TUPAMAROS. IF CHARGES THAT 5,000 PERSONS ARE
NOW BEING HELD WERE CORRECT, IT WOULD TAKE TWO MORE LIBERTADS (A
LARGE PRISON) OR 15 MORE FACILITIES THE SIZE OF PUNTA RIELES
TO HOLD THEM AND SUCH FACILITIES SIMPLY DO NOT EXIST. THIS IS A
SMALL COUNTRY AND IT IS HIGHLY UNLIKELY IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE THAT
AN ADDITIONAL 3,000 PERSONS COULD BE HELD ELSEWHERE WITHOUT IT
BEING KNOWN TO US.

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5. SENATOR CHURCH'S COMMENTS THAT "AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL HAS
TRACED 22 CASES OF PERSONS FATALLY TORTURED BY THE GOVERNMENT"
HAVE BEEN MADE BY OTHER PERSONS AND OUR REPLIES ARE AVAILABLE
TO THE DEPARTMENT. IT SOULD ALSO BE POINTED OUT THAT THE EXISTING
ARREST ORDER FOR WILSON FERREIRA IS NOT FOR "SEDITION" AS STATED
BY SENATOR CHURCH, BUT FOR "SUBVERSIVE ASSOCIATION". AS PREVIOUSLY
STATED, OTHER ASPECTS COMMENTED ON BY SENATOR CHURCH HAVE BEEN
COVERED IN DEPTH IN PREVIOUS EMBASSY REPORTING.

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To: STATE
Type: TE
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